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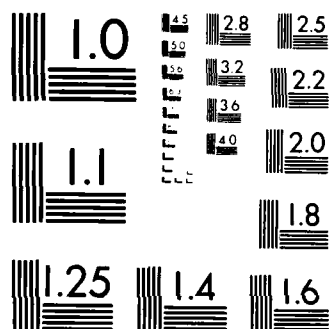
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EVALUATION AT THE UNIT LEVEL

BY

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Evaluation at the Unit Level

An Individual Essay

by

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US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
15 April 1985

ABSTRACT

The introduction of the Unit Test as part of the ARTEP/Mission Training Plan (MTP) has drawn criticism from various quarters that is based primarily on the Army's use of tests in the past, the Operational Readiness Tests. This essay draws on current literature and personal experience to counter this criticism. It points out the urgent need for the Unit Test, examines current thinking at TRADOC on the use and implementation of the Unit Test, cites examples of successful use of tests in the field, and discusses pitfalls that must be avoided. It concludes that TRADOC is squarely on track in making the Unit Test an effective means for commanders to judge the combat readiness and proficiency of subordinate units.

EVALUATION AT THE UNIT LEVEL

"No study is possible on the battlefield: one does there simply what one can in order to apply what one knows. Therefore, in order to do even a little, one has already to know a great deal and know it well."¹

The above quote by Marshal Ferdinand Foch presents a profound challenge to the training community and to leaders at every level, one that reaches the depths of the profession of arms: to ensure the survivability of soldiers on a future battlefield. Yet, in a recent article in Infantry by Lieutenant Colonel Richard F. Timmons, on junior leader proficiency he begins with the statement, "They just don't know their jobs!"² He based this contention on the quality of junior leaders who arrived in his battalion during his command tenure. In his article, he took the Army's school system to task for not doing their job better.

The school system certainly has an awesome training responsibility, and LTC Timmon's article might be useful in adjusting the focus of institutional training. This essay concerns the equally important training task that begins when the officer or soldier arrives at his unit and, particularly, the evaluation system at unit level which determines whether that training effort is being performed satisfactorily.

The Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) is the source document units use to train soldiers and to evaluate the results in the light of mission accomplishment. The ARTEP is currently undergoing an evolutionary change process, but one aspect which has not been viewed by some as evolutionary is the

introduction, as part of the ARTEP Mission Training Plan (MTP), of the Unit Test. Without knowing anything about the purpose of this new invention, the word "test" conjures up unpleasant memories of Operational Training Tests (ORTs) and the entire "zero defects" era. I intend to counter that notion and show that the Unit Test is needed and when properly employed can be a valuable tool for determining combat readiness and proficiency of small units.

The current thinking in the training community which gave birth to the Unit Test represents a swing from the decentralized training policy which began in 1971 to a more centralized one which once again places more emphasis on training accountability. There were many reasons for the swing. First, and foremost, the former policy was basically misunderstood. Higher headquarters in general and officers in particular adopted a management syndrome toward training, i.e., providing resources, while they delegated almost entirely the actual training of soldiers and responsibility for such training to the NCO chain of command.

As a battalion commander this became apparent to me in the difficulty I encountered getting my junior officers to conduct rehearsals and evaluations of their principal NCO trainers. Part of the problem may have been that the junior officers were not confident of their abilities to perform these duties, as LTC Timmons contends. However, they also perceived that their primary function was to set objectives and provide resources and only become involved in actual training when a major training event such as an ARTEP or Field Training Exercise (FTX) loomed on the horizon. Higher headquarters often fed this misperception in two ways: by not taking an active interest in learning what was going on in the training arena at the lower level and by inundating lower levels with miscellaneous requirements that kept junior officers at their desks instead of

in the training areas and motor pools, the ubiquitous training detractors problem.

There were other factors that called for a more centralized training policy. One was a recognized need for standardizing training procedures and methods across the Army that would counter a soldier learning, unlearning, and relearning the same procedure as he changed assignments during a career. The ARTEP was helpful in laying out the mission tasks to be accomplished. However, as a total training document, it lacked adequate guidance on how to train and how to resource and evaluate training. Consequently, a proliferation of training procedures and methods of varying quality resulted.

Another factor, already alluded to previously, was the tendency for a battalion to experience peaks and valleys in training proficiency depending on the schedule of major training events, ARTEPs and FTXs. Because of the infrequency of these major training events due to scarce training areas in most theaters, and the suspect quality of garrison training mentioned above, training proficiency in a unit could dip to a precariously low level. Furthermore, the battalion commander had to rely often on creative measurement devices and a lot of intuition to arrive at training readiness ratings during these "inactive" periods. In the division in which I commanded a battalion, a commander's assessment that his unit was at the highest training readiness level without the results of a recent ARTEP or FTX to back him up was severely challenged.

More recent events continued to show the need for a more centralized training policy and a return to training accountability. To paraphrase the Army Chief of Staff, the high quality of soldiers entering the Army demand high quality training from their NCO's and officers. The equipment modernization effort in the Army with over 400 new war-fighting systems being fielded requires

a higher level of technical proficiency of crews. New doctrine emphasizing initiative, agility, the offensive spirit, and synchronization require excellence in professionalism and military skills. And finally, because a future conflict will probably occur in the lower end of the spectrum requiring rapid deployment and employment of forces, the Army must be ready to go at all times with minimum "training up" time for an assigned mission.³

The TRADOC community is fervently working on the fixes to these deficiencies through the evolutionary expansion of the ARTEP as a total training program. TRADOC Regulation 310-2 (Test) is a complete revision to update responsibilities and procedures for the development, preparation, and management of the ARTEP. The product of this work is a series of ARTEP Mission Training Plans (MTP), each a detailed training guide for a particular echelon of the unit. Elements of the MTP are a training matrix, training plan, detailed training and evaluation outline (T&EO), drills, situational training exercises, and unit test guidance. As stated before, I will focus in this essay on the latter which seems to have generated the most controversy.

The purpose of the unit test is to provide commanders with a means to judge the combat readiness and proficiency of subordinate units up to company/team size. The test is developed and administered by the parent headquarters two echelons above the tested unit. It concentrates on the critical tasks which must be accomplished for the unit to be successful and survive on the modern battlefield and incorporates the use of the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) and a realistic Opposing Force (OPFOR). TRADOC Regulation 310-2 goes to great lengths to provide guidance to proponent schools for development of the test by formatting it into six sections and seven appendices and providing a sample test for a Mechanized Infantry Platoon. Standardization is

emphasized repeatedly: standardize available assets, scenario, evaluator packets and training, OPFOR composition and training, and scoring system. In implementing the test, a caution is added, however, to adapt the test to local conditions in the selected area of operations and to the equipment and manpower levels of the tested unit to give all an equal opportunity for success. Realism is emphasized through the development of a time phased scenario depicting conditions on the modern battlefield, the use of MILES and the interruption of the scenario at logical points to assess MILES casualties (and, subsequently to test their proper reporting and disposition), and the use of a realistic and properly trained OPFOR. The test is to be conducted under the watchful eye of a carefully selected and trained evaluator team which controls the action through the issuance of Operations Orders (OPORDs) and Fragmentary Orders (FRAGOs), and through the tested unit's higher headquarters command net. Except for the senior evaluator who is in radio contact with the unit commander, evaluators only observe the unit's actions during the test and do not speak to, aid, or in any way influence the performance of the unit except in the case of an emergency or unsafe act. However, immediately upon termination of the test, evaluators conduct an After Action Review (AAR) to reinforce the learning process. The AAR does not take the form of a critique during which tested personnel just listen but is organized to insure dialogue between evaluators and tested personnel on unit performance. Evaluators are also specifically trained to conduct this type of feedback.

I've only sketched out the rudiments of the unit test. All elements are laid out in excruciating detail in TRADOC Regulation 310-2.

But will the test achieve its stated purpose and what are the possible pitfalls? One of the best ways to answer these questions is to cite the experience of organizations which have been successful in using tests to

evaluate training. The first of these is the 1st Infantry Division who has implemented such a test not only at the platoon company/team level but at the battalion task force level. They call it "The Eight Day ARTEP FTX" described in an article of that name in the December 1984 Military Review. Faced with training problems that I outlined at the beginning of this article, they designed the Battalion Task Force ARTEP FTX to be conducted between external ARTEPs which occurred every 18 months. The ideal frequency for these ARTEP FTXs was determined to be every three months in order to base the subsequent quarter's training on an FTX evaluation. However, availability of training areas dictated that each battalion task force could participate in an ARTEP FTX as the evaluated unit or the opposing force every six months. Between ARTEP FTXs, battalions and brigades, conducted individual and small unit training, platoon tests, company and team ARTEP FTXs, Command Post Exercises (CPXs), and Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWTs) in preparation for the next one. The authors of the ARTEP FTX development and implementation in the 1st Infantry Division most definitely had an advance copy of TRADOC Regulation 310-2 and their proponent school's MTP since they followed the principles therein explicitly. I do not intend to detail their implementation here but I wholeheartedly recommend the referenced article to interested readers. I will mention the results that they achieved. As stated by LTC William R. Lynch III, author of the article "The Eight-Day ARTEP FTX":

"The proof of the success of recent ARTEP FTXs has come in the form of comments from task force commanders and other leaders. They say this kind of exercise provides superb, realistic training. They uniformly appreciate the opportunity to be part of the analysis of training issues, and the clarity of the lessons learned enable them to improve in many areas while they train."⁴

As far as the future of the ARTEP FTX in the 1st Infantry Division is concerned, LTC Lynch writes:

The success of the Eight-Day ARTEP FTX will be sustained and developed further in the future. The 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) is considering an expanded live-fire phase with an evaluation of platoons (platoon tests) in separate exercises. Consideration is also being given to exercising two task forces simultaneously, opposed by an opposing force task force. In addition, the Eight-Day ARTEP FTX will become a division vehicle to insure standardization. As these refinements are made, it is increasingly clear that the Eight-Day ARTEP FTX is the linchpin for training soldiers to fight and win the Air-Land Battle."⁵

The second success story is the method of teaching 7th Infantry Division leaders in the Light Leaders Course conducted at Fort Benning which emphasizes the use of tests in learning tactical battle drills. Under the tutelage of the York Branch, Benning Ranger Division of the U.S. Army Ranger Department, the course objective is to instill "the tactics and the abilities soldiers need to become skilled, tough, aggressive, and smart light infantrymen."⁶ The course is divided into three phases with the meat of the course packed into the third phase -- the tactical battle drill portion. During this phase, students are taught 24 battle drills until they can perform each flawlessly and in turn effectively teach each drill to their fellow students. A final examination entails the accomplishment of these drills as portions of ARTEP missions during a situational training exercise. Students throughout the training are observed and evaluated by York Team instructors on the tactical application of the subject matter as well as their leadership, motivation, supervision, and communication.

Captain William D. Phillips, Chief of the York Branch of the Ranger
Department says of the training:

"The Light Leaders Course has had a significant effect on the 7th Infantry Division's preparation for conducting the Light Fighters Course at Fort Ord...The spirit of the light infantry is thus spread from the Rangers through the division's leaders and on to its soldiers. The divisions that follow the 7th in this training process should find it equally beneficial when they convert to the light infantry organization."

There are other success stories where tests of one form or another have proved to be effective evaluation tools, but the two above, cover the range of possibilities.

Certainly the scope of the second example is more in line with that in TRADOC Regulation 310-2. It also pertains to a most important training imperative tactical battle drill. Command Sergeant Major of the Army Glen E. Morrell has said:

"The basic difference between a well trained unit and one that is not is found in the attention paid to the fundamentals of individual and small unit skills."

Also, the importance that the Israeli Army places on tactical battle drill in training and its successful application in war is well known. Since a drill is a technique or procedure that is learned through repetitive training until it becomes instinctive, it naturally follows that a test can be an effective performance measure to indicate mastery or the need for additional training. Furthermore, a test has additional benefits. CSM Morrell continues:

"Trusting a soldier to perform a critical task places his reputation and pride on the line. The mission or task becomes very personal; the stakes are high when trust is involved. The weakest leader or soldier will try harder when placed in the limelight under fire. When the trusted soldier is successful and the success is recognized by the leaders, that soldier gains confidence. With each success the attitude and proficiency of the soldier improve."⁹

The testing process assists soldiers in becoming supremely confident of their own abilities and those of their leaders. Each member of the team becomes like a well drilled athlete who knows his craft so well that he is able to take advantage of any possibility of making a winning play. He knows the rules of the game, the constraints of the situation, and the abilities of the other players. The Chief of Staff of the Army calls this phenomena synergism "that comes from well trained soldiers and units. Such units have a greater capability than the sum of their parts. They perform and survive better in battle and have fewer casualties. Morale, esprit, discipline -- all have fewer casualties. Morale, esprit, discipline -- all are elements of this phenomena."¹⁰ Certainly, testing is only a part of the training process that results in well trained soldiers and units, but I believe it to be an essential part.

The final aspect that must be addressed are the pitfalls associated with a test. First, testing certainly brings with it accountability - trainers and their training program will be judged based on the performance of their subordinates on the test. However, key to the effectiveness of the testing process is the purpose of the judgement - teaching and learning vice retribution. Teaching and learning are the purpose of the whole training system, so there should be no change when it comes to testing. The proper

conduct of an After Action Review as laid out in TRADOC Regulation 310-2 is critical and must be adhered to and supported by the chain of command at all levels. Leaders and soldiers must perceive the test as a learning experience and not something that is primarily identified with punitive action or significant negative input on Officer Efficiency Reports (OERs)/Enlisted Efficiency Reports(SEERs).

Another problem may be rampant competition. Competition is inherent to the Army, a healthy and wholesome necessity when it is held within bounds. The Unit Test will foster increased competition within a unit. However, it must never reach the level where an officer or NCO is tempted to turn in a false report or wins by cheating. Competition at that level becomes destructive to personal integrity and unit cohesion.

I believe the pitfalls outlined above can easily be overcome through the use of leadership and management techniques espoused in today's Army. Therefore, I am firmly convinced that the time for unit testing has come and that TRADOC is squarely on track in the development of TRADOC Regulation 310-2. Their utilization of testing at the small unit level in teaching tactical battle drill is essentially correct although it has applicability at higher levels as the experience of the 1st Infantry Division has shown. Unit testing meets the urgent needs for training accountability, standardization, and continuous readiness. And finally, with such a testing system in place, future battalion commanders will be able to confidently ascertain whether their leaders and soldiers do in fact know their jobs.

ENDNOTES

1. General William R. Richardson, "TRADOC Pursuit of Doctrinal Sufficiency Multifaceted," Army, October 1984, p.79.
2. Lieutenant Colonel Richard F. Timmons, "Junior Leader Proficiency," Infantry, September-October 1984, p.22.
3. General John A. Wickham, Jr., Guideposts for a Proud and Ready Army, pp. 5-6.
4. Lieutenant Colonel William R. Lynch III, "The Eight-Day ARTEP FTX," Military Review, December 1984, p.22.
5. Ibid.
6. Captain William D. Phillips, "The Light Leaders Course," Infantry, January-February 1985, p.37.
7. Ibid.
8. SMA Glen E. Morrell, "Hard Work, Leadership, Still Keys to Quality," Army, October 1984, p.52.
9. Ibid. p.53.
10. General John A. Wickham, Jr., Guideposts for a Proud and Ready Army, p.7.

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